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ON THE OMISSION OF THE AUXILIARY *ESSE*

The following table shows the comparative frequency with which the auxiliary *esse* is omitted, in the case of the three infinitives which it helps to form, and in the three prose authors usually read in preparation for college. The text covered includes eight orations of Cicero—Pompey's Command, the four Catilines, Archias, Milo, and Marcellus—the seven books of the *Gallic War*, and the full text of Nepos. The numbers are given in pairs, the first number in each pair indicating the omissions of *esse*, the second its use.

	Perfect Passive	Second Periphrastic	Future Active	Totals
Cicero	35—104	28—26	25—21	88—151
Caesar	74— 24	72— 7	116— 9	262— 40
Nepos	27— 10	12— 4	78— 0	117— 14
	136—138	112—37	219—30	467—205

Of the 79 second periphrastic infinitives in the *Gallic War*, 29 are impersonal and, without exception, omit *esse*.

The statement often found that the *esse* of the future infinitive is *sometimes* omitted is evidently no exaggeration.

The difference indicated between the three authors in regard to this omission corresponds, in a general way, to their well-known differences in style. Where there is a choice between longer and shorter forms, we should expect to find in Cicero's orations, rhetorical and sometimes ornate in character, a greater proportion of the longer forms than in Caesar's concise and unembellished history; while Nepos, in his simple, colloquial narratives, sometimes seems willing to leave out almost any word that a vivid imagination may be induced to supply.

An increasing tendency to omit the *esse* is noticeable in the *Gallic War*. The ratios for the first five and the last two books are given below.

	Perfect Passive	Second Periphrastic	Future Active
<i>B.G.</i> 1-5	43—23	38—5	79—9
<i>B.G.</i> 6, 7	31— 1	34—2	37—0

A similar tendency is observable in Cicero's writings, if we may judge from the eight orations read.

	Perfect Passive	Second Periphrastic	Future Active
First six orations . . .	15—83	17—22	14—14
Milo and Marcellus . .	20—21	11— 4	11— 7

In order to see why the three infinitives differ in the frequency with which they omit the *esse*, it is necessary to consider the relative degree of ambiguity which such an omission tends to produce. The attributive and the appositive use of the perfect passive participle in the accusative forms is extremely common, and in many places nothing but a comma, which the Romans did not have, or an *et*, which they often left out, would distinguish such a use from the perfect passive infinitive, if *esse* were omitted. The accusative forms of the gerundive, on the other hand, are very rarely found, except directly after *ad* or in this second periphrastic infinitive, while the use of the accusative future participle, in the authors under discussion, is almost wholly confined to the future active infinitive. Nepos, therefore, finds no difficulty in making his meaning clear, without once using an *esse* in a future infinitive.

It may be added that since all three infinitives are almost without exception in the indirect discourse construction, the presence of some expression of *saying, thinking*, etc., still further reduces such ambiguity as the omission of the *esse* might tend to produce.

BERNARD M. ALLEN

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